

The Political Philosopher in Democratic Society: The Socratic View

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In an age in which not only the alternatives of action but also those of thought have become peculiarly impoverished, it behooves us to search for the lost, profound possibilities of human life. We are in need of a comprehensive reflection on the ends of politics, but we are confronted with a host of objections which make that enterprise seem impossible. A return to the origins of political philosophy—that is, a return to Socrates—is requisite if we are to clarify the nature of political philosophy and elaborate its intention and possibility. This attempt to recapture the original project of the political philosopher is a difficult one because we are searching without knowing quite what we are looking for, hence it is hard to know when we have found it. The best beginning is to focus our attention and efforts on those works which have least in common with our mode of treating problems and which were once taken seriously by serious men but are hard for us to take seriously. Writers like Isocrates and Xenophon have fallen into disfavor, but it is precisely from their rhetoric and restraint that we could learn of the taste of Thucydides and Plato and of the capital importance of the virtue of moderation in the political thought of the ancient authors. When we do not understand Isocrates and Xenophon, we do not understand Thucydides and Plato. We see in these latter concerns of our own, and they lose their liberating effect. Our horizon is protected from attack by a habit of not noticing

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what is not comprehended by it. As a result, what is unknown and important takes on the guise of the commonplace or trivial for us.

One of the best antidotes for this kind of myopia is the study of the smaller Platonic dialogues. They are short, which in one sense makes them easier; for it is almost impossible to devote the appropriate attention to every line, every word, of a book the length of the *Laws*; our eye skips over what ought to be perplexing; time does not permit the attention to the incredibly elaborate detail, nor are our intelligences ordinarily competent to the survey of such a large, complex whole. A dialogue which is a few pages long permits one to wonder over every detail, to ask innumerable questions of the text, to use on it every resource of intellect, passion, and imagination. In another sense, though, these small dialogues are much more difficult, for they are so strange. With the *Republic*, for example, a long tradition of philosophy tells us what the issues are; we know that the question is justice and the best regime. When we read the sections on the good and knowledge, we feel at home because we see them as parts of a great discussion which has been going on in Western thought for two and a half millennia, a discussion participated in by Locke, Kant, and Nietzsche, who use the same terms as does Plato. This sense of familiarity may be spurious; we may be reading the text as seen by the tradition rather than raising Plato's own questions, interpreting all of the foreign elements in the book in the light of questions posed to it by later thinkers. This is, of course, the danger; for if we cannot understand dialogues which do not contain the well-known themes, it means that we do not really know what Plato was about or what the dialogue form is and means. Still and all, we do feel at home in the big, famous dialogues. But when we come to a dialogue like the *Ion*, what are we to say about Socrates' meeting with a stupid reciter of the Homeric poems whom Socrates treats like an oracle, to whom he attributes divine inspiration, and who, at the end, in desperation at his incapacity to define himself in the face of Socrates' sophistic arguments, insists that he is Greece's greatest general? It all seems too mad. What is the philosophic significance of all this? Each of the smaller dialogues has this strange character. The scholarly reaction to such curious works has been to ignore them, to consider them spurious because Socrates would never have engaged in such discussions nor Plato recorded them, or to treat them as logical exercises, pro-paedeutic to real philosophy.

I would suggest that the big dialogues cannot be understood with-

out understanding the little ones first, for the former are responses to problems elaborated in the latter, responses which become meaningful only against the background of those problems. Plato was more interested in posing the proper questions than in providing answers. Perhaps the most important question of all is what is philosophy, how is it possible, and why is it necessary? Philosophy emerges late in human history; it was still new in Socrates' time. It is not coeval with man as families, cities, and the useful arts seem to be. It could not be taken for granted. It also was suspected, ridiculed, and hated. It not only had to constitute itself; it had to defend itself. The little dialogues characterize Socrates', and hence philosophy's, confrontation with the opinions or conventions out of which philosophy emerged, the confrontation with the authoritative views of the pious, the poets, the statesmen, the people at large, etc. In other words, these dialogues sketch out the images on the wall of the cave, reveal their inadequacy, and point toward the road upward; they present the first, the commonsense horizon of man, the horizon which must be transcended but which must first be known in order to be transcended. Every explanation of the world presupposes a rich apprehension of the phenomena of the world; otherwise that explanation will be as impoverished as is the awareness which it seeks to clarify. Plato elaborates the commonsense horizon in the little dialogues. Each of the interlocutors represents an archetypical prejudice. Their arguments are always poor, but they are poor because something in their souls attaches them to falsehood. Thus, if we see the reasons for the poor arguments, we learn of the complexity of the soul as well as of the various views of what is most important to believe and know. These dialogues canvass the types of human soul and the most powerful prephilosophic opinions about the true and the good. They appear mad, because the common sense of this world is always somehow self-contradictory or askew; if pushed to its conclusion it leads to absurdity in thought and action, and it is precisely this character of common sense that necessitates philosophy and makes its emergence difficult. Philosophy, unlike the prejudices it seeks to replace, must be aware of its origins and its reason for being. The smaller dialogues are necessary to us because they unambiguously force us to learn Plato's mode of interpretation of the world and because they are almost indispensable aids to the enrichment of our consciousness so vital to any nonabstract pursuit of clarity about the most important questions.

Now, the *Hipparchus* is one of two dialogues Socrates carries on with an unnamed companion. The other is the *Minos*. Because the dialogue is acted out directly, we can learn nothing of the setting, the occasion for the meeting of the two men or any other detail which might reveal its intention. Both the *Hipparchus* and the *Minos* begin with the most profound Socratic question “What is . . . ?” the *Minos* investigating the nature of law and the *Hipparchus* that of profit, and both culminate in a provocative, extravagant, and unsubstantiated praise of a man usually thought to be an enemy of Athens, after whom the dialogue is named. A foreign oppressor is involved with respect to the law, a domestic tyrant with respect to profit. The similarities between the two dialogues make their differences interesting and revealing. Minos is the son of a God and has intercourse with him; Hipparchus is the son of a human being and no mention of the gods is made in the dialogue except for four oaths of the companion. Perhaps connected with the foregoing observations is the fact that Socrates is peculiarly brutal to his companion in the *Hipparchus*. This fact is certainly related to the further fact that Hipparchus, the man praised, was a tyrant.

The *Hipparchus*, like the *Minos*, has a double title; it is “Hipparchus or Lover of Profit” (I translate *philokerdēs* as “profiteer,” for that about matches the moral tone of the Greek). Perhaps the two are meant to be identical; if so, the praise of Hipparchus would be most revealing.

As already stated, the first words of the dialogue put the Socratic question, and it is put by Socrates himself. He is trying to learn from the companion, asking what kind of a thing profiteering is. It is a naive question, one that makes Socrates look like the unworldly inhabitant of the thinktank Aristophanes put him into, now venturing forth into the world to find out about the human things known to everyone else. We obviously enter a conversation that has already begun, and we do not know the reason Socrates puts his question to his companion, who is quite willing to instruct him, but we may suppose that the companion had said something denigrating about profiteers and Socrates wanted to know what was wrong with them.

“What is profiteering?” is indeed in the form of an authentic Socratic question, but it is really ill put, or a secondary question, for the answer to it depends on a prior answer to the question “What is profit?” The neglect of the more fundamental question results in the totally unsatisfactory character of the whole discussion, for the com-

panion and the Socrates clearly mean different things, and the companion is unaware of even the possibility of such a difference. But this is not what we would today call a difficulty of communication, for it would clearly be beyond the capacity of the companion to grasp what Socrates holds to be profitable; if Socrates were to explain that to him, the companion would merely hear words. Although the discussion in that case might not arrive at its ultimate impasse, their agreement would be merely formal, for the companion would still continue prizing the things he had always prized. The difficulty in speech reveals a difficulty in the soul of the companion; the insufficiency of the conversation is a condition of a sufficient representation of that soul which necessarily holds self-contradictory opinions. The interesting thing about the conversation is its development of the views typically held by a man such as the companion and particularly the relation of those views to the life of Socrates.

The companion holds that money, or what it represents, is what is good. The word "profit" for him means what it means today to most men in commercial societies. They might be aware of a broader sense of the term, but that sense is not what they primarily mean when they use the term. The attachment to money is really identical to the attachment to life and comfort and, according to Socrates, is the motivation of the great majority of men. The companion, hence, belongs to, and represents, that lowest class of the *Republic* which Socrates calls the money-loving or profiteering class, even though the companion professes to berate profiteers. His exclusive concern for money is made explicit only at the end of the discussion, but it motivates his responses from the beginning. The discussion never moves beyond the companion's understanding of profit. It would have been easy to make it do so, for few men are willing in speech to admit that they care solely for safety and comfort; something forces them to recognize that there are nobler objects, but in deed most men care more for the useful than the noble. The *Hipparchus* investigates the moral taste of such men; Socrates facilitates this intention by not mentioning the companion's motive and only questioning its consequences, for in this way that motive operates unabashedly, unaffected by the shame exposure would cause.

225 Socrates asks a double question: what is profiteering and who are
a-b the profiteers? The companion chooses to tell who the profiteers are, proving that he is less interested in the nature of the thing than in

attacking a certain kind of man. He formulates it with rhetorical elegance: profiteers are those who think it is worth profiting from what is worthless. His meaning is immediately obvious—he means cheaters, those who sell useless things by deceit, the most common type of fraudulent business operators—but that meaning is not obvious to Socrates. He naively asks whether they know that the things are worthless, adding that they would be fools if they did not. Socrates, *Candide*-like, apparently does not know that there are men who would deceive others about the worth of things, and the companion is eager to inform him of the hard ways of the world, expecting to gain an ally in his war against the vicious. The companion in his assurance as to Socrates' meaning and his haste to make his condemnation of the profiteers fails to notice the ambiguity of Socrates' question. He takes it that Socrates wants to know if the profiteers make a profit by selling something the value of which they mistakenly overestimate; this would mean they could not be blamed; one must know one is committing a crime if one is to be considered responsible for it; since the companion wishes to blame the profiteers, he must insist on their full knowledge. But Socrates' question could, and should, be interpreted to mean that if something is simply worthless, one cannot profit from it, and only a fool would try to. There are two senses of worth here, worth for making profit and worth for the buyer. Socrates begins to play on their double sense, not to confuse the companion but because it represents a real, unresolved problem in the companion's own thought. The companion believes the profiteers actually do get something good, although he himself may be hurt by their doing so. He concentrates on the harm done to others, including himself, by profiteers, whereas Socrates seems indifferent to that and seems to concentrate on the efficacy of the profiteers' quest for profit. The companion, in reassuring Socrates that the profiteers certainly do know what they are doing, manifests a certain envy of the profiteers, calling them wicked and villains. Of course, he who makes a quick killing is no fool; he gets his own good at the expense of others. The companion believes, as do all those who speak in this way, that he knows what is profitable and that there is a conflict between private and public good, and he condemns the pursuit of private good in order to protect the public good. The profiteer is daring; he is shameless. Shame, fear of the opinion of others, prevents men from being profiteers; but shame or no shame, it re-

mains that what the profiteer gets is truly profitable to him. The more advantageous the profiteer's dealings are, the more intense is the blame. Socrates, however, does not share the companion's ambivalence. Rather than looking naive, he might on closer examination appear shameless himself; he is not shocked at men's profiting from the worthless; he is merely curious as to whether it can be done. He attempts to indicate this to the companion by citing the example of a farmer. Would a farmer think it is worth profiting from planting a worthless plant? The companion, not responding to Socrates' hint, answers that a profiteer supposes he should profit from everything.

The example, to which the companion paid no attention, is actually quite revealing. The farmer and the profiteer both aim at increase; if a farmer's plants are worthless, they will not grow; if the profiteer sows worthless seeds of profit, they will not grow into profits. Judging from the point of view of the farmer and the profiteer, no worthless means can achieve their ends. The companion would readily admit this for the farmer, but he does not see the analogy between farmer and profiteer. The farmer's harvest is produced by nature and has a natural use value, whereas the profiteer harvests a crop of conventional money. It is precisely the disproportion between the natural or use value of things and what people will pay for them that the profiteer exploits and the companion complains about. But the companion is a lover of money and takes its pursuit to be natural. Thus he would really have to accept the comparison between a farmer's planting and a profiteer's investing and hence have to evaluate the worth of the means in relation to the achievement of the ends. Money, as Aristotle and Marx also saw, is ambiguous: it can represent the natural value of things, or it can be valuable in itself; in the former case it would be measured by the things, in the latter the things would be measured by it. Thus money can become an end in itself and can be desired in infinite amounts, divorced from any possible use, as opposed, say, to artichokes. The love of money, beginning from a natural desire for future power, gradually makes a man a prisoner of conventional value and alienates him from even the consideration of natural worth. The companion loves money and, at the same time, wants those who sell to him to be more concerned with natural worth or usefulness than money. The companion, in order to avoid contradiction, would have to distinguish between worth in money to the seller and worth in use to the buyer and

elaborate the consequences of that distinction. But he is hopelessly confused about it, and this confusion is vitally linked to his whole view of men and things.

25b- Socrates responds brutally to the companion's assertion that the
 26a profiteer supposes he should profit from everything. He tells him to stop answering aimlessly like a man who has suffered some injustice at someone's hands. The sense of injustice suffered causes a man to make irrelevant answers, according to Socrates; he implies that indignation, at least in the companion's case, is only a form of selfish revenge and high principles only a form of self-protection. Indignation, outrage at injustice, only becloud serious consideration of important questions. Socrates, most uncharacteristically, banishes considerations of justice in favor of those of profit. At this point in the discussion he appears to deny the companion the possibility of saying that the profiteer is bad because he harms others, implying that the arguments against profiteering are merely made to protect one's own profit from cleverer seekers of profit. He treats the companion like an enemy, part of a conspiracy to deny him his own profit. He heightens this impression by making a contemptuous reference to the "wise phrases" clever men use in the courts of justice and mocking the rhetorical style of the companion's definition of profiteers. This moralism is a lot of high-flown talk designed to give a veneer of decency to a compact between men who do not believe in justice but wish to avoid suffering injustice, a compact made to inhibit a man from knowing what his true profit is. The courts are the instruments of this conspiracy. Socrates accuses the companion of wilfully trying to deceive him. As the companion feared deception in money matters, so Socrates fears it in speeches. It would seem that to avoid the deceptions of the profiteer there is a tendency to deceive potential profiteers about the nature of profit. What in another context might have been identified as considerations of justice Socrates here qualifies as the contrivances of hypocrisy. Socrates charges the companion with wanting Socrates to believe what the companion does not himself believe. Presumably for the sake of self-protection, he wants to convince Socrates of the badness of the profiteers; thus the companion could rely on him.

26 By thus browbeating the companion, Socrates turns the conversa-
 -d tion away from the blame of profiteering and does not permit him to introduce considerations of justice or the effect of profiteering on

others. He takes the companion's assertion that the profiteers know that they are profiting from worthless things and converts it into the assertion that a profiteer is a knower, like all the artisans who know things. The farmer, the horse trainer, the pilot of a ship, and the general would never knowingly choose worthless means to gain their end; the ends of each of the arts mentioned is clear, and the worth of the means is determined by the end of the art. One would never, for example, judge of the worth of the manure used in farming by the discomfort it causes passersby. Similarly the profiteer's means would properly be judged in relation only to his end, which is profit, and not to the effects of those means on others. He would certainly not use worthless things for profit in this sense, for it would be both contrary to the nature of the knower and impossible. And thus it turns out that according to the companion's definition no one is a profiteer; he blames men who do not exist.

We are of course outraged by this terrible argument, but it really does the companion full justice in the deeper sense. He is selfish; he loves money overmuch, but at the same time he wishes to restrict the pursuit of money so that a community, the precondition of his making money, can exist. It is somewhat like Locke's solution to the political problem. In this perspective not the pursuit of profit but the means used are blamed. But that community has no dignity; it is no different from a band of robbers. Such a community's laws can hardly compel a man of superior power to abandon his pursuit of profit. The moral prohibitions become empty, mere attempts to dupe him. In the most radical way, Socrates' argument concludes that the ends justify the means. It is a dangerous conclusion. The only way for the companion to avoid its dangerous consequences is for him to reconsider the ends.

226d— This he now tries to do but in a fainthearted way, for neither his
227c thought nor his tastes make him capable of discussing the hierarchy of goods—since he does not really believe there is one. He merely suggests that due to incontinence or insatiability men cling to things that are worth little or nothing. Thus he tries to find his way out of the maze by saying that profiteers are always worried about profit, meaning money, even when the gains are very small; uncontrolled passion causes them to be that way. This definition is an attack no longer on lack of shame but on lack of moderation. A man who controlled his passions would not want or need so much profit. The profiteer is motivated by a desire for gain which is not quite worth-

less but which is not worthwhile enough to justify his efforts. There is a praise of moderation implied in all of this, but there is no indication in the name of what; it is clear only that moderate men would not be likely to need to take advantage of other men, but what good moderation would be to its practitioners the companion in no way indicates. In order to salvage his condemnation of profiteers he now does speak of their ends and says that they are of very small weight; he is almost forced to say that profit is not important. Shame would cause a man to care about others and was a sufficient motivation for the comrade to encourage when he thought Socrates would share his concern; now he must argue that continence is good for the individual or that profit is not good. He can hardly believe this definition as he did the first, and Socrates easily overturns it. He rather illegitimately argues from their agreement about the means that the profiteers cannot know their ends are worthless. If they are ignorant, they cannot be blamed; they would need education. Men only pursue what they think to be good, so that, for the discussion, all that remains of the second definition is that profiteers have a passion for profit. Socrates establishes that profit is good, or even *the* good, by the negative road of getting the companion to admit that all loss is bad. The companion may have his doubts about profit for reasons of shame or fear, but loss he cannot accept. However, if profit is the opposite of loss, profit must be good. The companion and Socrates and all men love all good things and wish to possess them. Therefore all men are profiteers, and again profiteers cannot be blamed. The companion could only defend himself if he were to say that men should be judged on the basis of the adequacy of their understanding of the good, but he cannot, for he believes that the good is really known and its pursuit is shared by all men.

Socrates is gradually disarming the companion and breaking down all the barriers to selfish conduct to which the companion holds. He has tantamount to defended shameless daring in the use of the means to profit and immoderation in the pursuit of the end of profit.

27c- The companion makes a last effort to defend his condemnation of
 28b profiteers. This he does by setting as a standard the conduct of decent men, or gentlemen, and applying it to the consideration of the ends and means of profit. He no longer insists that these ends or means are worthless; he has learned he cannot argue that. Instead he distinguishes between two kinds of men, the decent and the wicked, and asserts that the profiteer is among the wicked, for he is serious about

things which no gentleman would be serious about and thinks it is worth profiting from things no gentleman would dare to profit from. If we can enter into the companion's world for a moment, we can see what he is trying to do. He knows that there are some admirable men, men faithful in their contracts, men whom one can trust. Such men are somehow superior; they are proof against the temptations ever present in human dealings. We blame profiteers because they do not behave as such men do, whether it is from shamelessness or extreme passion. The decent men, as it appears to the companion, are not motivated by profit; their conduct cannot be understood in terms of utility; decency and profit are irreducible, and if profit alone were pursued, there would be no decency left in the world. The companion thus both wishes profit and despises it in admiring those who are superior to it. Although he tries to maintain the notion of moral dignity, his view is in some sense low because he sees no profit in decency. He is forced to say that there are good goods and bad goods, and bad goods are those which are profitable but not such as are pursued by decent men. But decency is then without motivation; astonishingly, the companion's morality is like Kant's. Socrates, on the other hand, insists that all desire and action must be motivated by desire to possess the good; good and bad men are not distinguished from one another by the latter's caring for their own good while the former do not. On the companion's level, Socrates' teaching must appear corrupt, for as he understands it, that teaching encourages men to do whatever they want, or more specifically, to pursue money without restraint. Only by denying that increase of money is profit could that consequence be avoided, and this the companion will never do, at least in his heart of hearts. And Socrates thus has put his finger on the internal contradiction in the ordinary view of decency: it is not held to be profitable itself, hence it is either useful for some other goal or it is without ground and its practice folly. Profit has been conceded by the companion to be good, but he must also say it is bad, and so must anyone who is aware that there is a tension between profitable conduct and decent conduct. Socrates, in his pursuit of the good, must again accuse the companion of deceiving him because the companion tries to stop him from his pursuit by saying that the good is bad.

Now the companion has been told by Socrates that any way of profiting is good, that we should pursue profit insatiably and that good men do not differ from bad ones in this decisive respect; and

thus he, with an oath, must counter by accusing Socrates of deceiving him. The arguments seem to have removed all restraints on what the companion must assume to be Socrates' desire to do him harm; and Socrates is destroying the horizon without which the companion cannot orient himself. The companion learns about a new kind of cheating, the use of worthless arguments which he cannot understand. He wishes to repress the profiteering of the man who seeks knowledge that might be damaging to him just as much as he wishes to repress the profiteering of the man who seeks monetary gains that might be damaging to him. Socrates, since he has apparently destroyed all grounds for the companion's trusting him, must hasten to reassure him.

28b- Socrates adopts a fantastic mode of reassuring the companion. He
 29d tries to show him that he is a disciple of a man who did not believe in deceiving others, or rather, friends. In doing so he must also show that his master is a man to be admired, and thus, in this backhanded and implausible way, Socrates introduces the hero of the dialogue, Hipparchus. Only this digression, which disrupts the surface movement of the discussion and is apparently irrelevant to it, permits us to see its true intention. Socrates' procedure is odd from any point of view, for in making Hipparchus his authority, he refers to a man who is popularly considered to have been a tyrant, the most extreme example of what the companion has been attacking, the ultimately successful profiteer who has gained possession of the city and everything in it. Rather than identify himself with what is respectable and thereby prove his own respectability, Socrates has the insolence to choose the greatest villain known to the Athenian democracy, praise him, and expect to be respected for it. He modestly introduces Hipparchus as "our fellow citizen." Socrates suggests that the profiteer will indeed be beyond the law, will take advantage of others, will not want to accept the rule of equality which is dear to the companion; but he further suggests that such a profiteer is a superior man and that, if the companion will only let himself be taken advantage of, he will profit from being ruled by him. Hipparchus is, above all, motivated by the love of wisdom; as money is profit for the companion, so is wisdom profit for Hipparchus, who was willing to spend money lavishly on procuring and displaying wisdom; he is a profiteer, a *philokerdes*, but in his case this is identical with being a lover of wisdom, a *philosophos*. This is a new kind of profiteering, unknown to the companion, an insatiable thirst, one which defies the laws of

equality but the satisfaction of which does not depend on taking from others but rather provides plenty for others without loss to itself. This is what Socrates was referring to when he spoke of profit, and here we get a hint of his side of a discussion in which we have thus far seen only the companion's side. In this perspective, Socrates' conclusions, which seemed so sinister to the companion, are not only innocent but salutary. But the companion would condemn this form of profiteering just as he did the other. It does not obey the rules so essential to the companion's self-protection; his condemnation of the low form of profiteering includes a condemnation of the high form, and Socrates' apparent defense of the low form is really a defense of the high to a man who cannot even imagine its existence. This explains Socrates' anger with the companion; the companion, in all his apparent respectability, is the enemy of philosophy.

But in order to clarify all this, we must investigate the Hipparchus story and particularly Thucydides' account of it. In this way, we can see what Socrates is doing against the background of reality. The Athenians believed that Hipparchus was an unjust tyrant and that he was assassinated by Harmodius and Aristogeiton out of a noble love of freedom. They were thus in the deepest sense the founders of Athenian democracy and were sacrificed to as divine beings. The goodness and necessity of Athenian democracy were proved by the terribleness of the alternative to it; the attachment to the democratic regime was strengthened by this belief, and anyone diverging from the principles of the democracy could be accused of tyrannical ambitions. The fear of tyranny, grounded in alleged Athenian experience, was a valuable tool for demagogues. Thucydides, in the context of the Athenian condemnation of Alcibiades after the mutilation of the Hermae, takes the occasion to subject this essential part of the Athenian tradition to closer scrutiny. He shows that the rule of the Peisistratid family was excellent prior to the assassination of Hipparchus and that the bad behavior of the tyrants was a result of the tyrannicides' deed. The whole Athenian account belongs to the realm of political myth. All of the details are wrong. Hippias was the tyrant; the plot against Hippias failed and only his younger brother Hipparchus was killed. Harmodias and Aristogeiton were motivated not by love of freedom but by revenge in a tawdry, subpolitical erotic scandal. The two lovers had only the remotest connection with the establishment of democracy. They rather caused the tyranny to become tyrannical; it was the Spartans, foreigners, who deposed the

Peisistratids, and it is not at all clear that Harmodius' and Aristogeiton's deed had any part in producing this result. Thucydides in this correction of the popular account implicitly asks the question whether a tyranny is the worst possible alternative; he shows the unreasoning element in the treatment of Alcibiades. He makes it possible to think what is unthinkable and allows one to see out beyond the walls built in the mind by Athenian prejudice.

Socrates takes a different route to a goal not dissimilar to Thucydides'. In discussion with an Athenian, he accepts the story that Hipparchus was the ruler. He simply denies that the description of Hipparchus is accurate. Hipparchus is the victim of a calumny of the democrats, and if one were to understand the facts, one would wish to be ruled by him again, for his was the golden age and the Athenians lived as in the time of Cronos.

Socrates makes his own myth to counterpoise the Athenian one and thus liberates from Athenian prejudice, finding within Athens and its tradition a model for the regime and the man he understands to be good.

The salient aspects of the description of Hipparchus are the following: he was a lover of wisdom and was motivated by the desire to be admired for his wisdom. He therefore had to become an educator in order to make his subjects good enough to admire his virtues. There was a perfect proportion between his selfish interest and the common good. In order to be admired for his own wisdom he had to become an opponent of the prevailing wisdom, which was the Delphic wisdom, expressed best in the two phrases "Know thyself" and "Nothing too much." In response to these he set up Hermae throughout Attica, engraved with such examples of his wisdom as these: "Walk thinking just thoughts" and "Don't deceive a friend."

These two wise sayings do not appear to rival those of the Delphic oracle, but reflection may at least help to give some indication of what might be considered wise in them. A hint is provided by the *Charmides* where the potential tyrant Critias in discussing moderation interprets the two Delphic utterances as meaning the same thing; a man who knows himself does nothing in excess; the Delphic teaching is one of moderation. And in combating it Hipparchus carries forward the criticism of moderation which dominated the first part of the dialogue. It was precisely the refutation of the arguments for vulgar moderation that forced Socrates to try to find a substitute for it that can guarantee decent human intercourse, and Hipparchus' say-

ings are supposed to be that substitute. Following Critias' lead, we might suggest that Hipparchus' two sayings are also identical: justice is not deceiving friends. To put it otherwise, a man should behave decently toward others not because he has restrained his passions or given up his satisfaction but because they are friends, because his satisfaction comes from benefiting them. There are two opposed notions of justice, the one conceiving of justice as unprofitable duty, the other as the satisfaction of giving their deserts to those whom one loves. The former, a more political view, concentrates on men's opposition of interests and provides what is necessary for a community; the latter, more fitting to the private life, concentrates on what men can have in common and the mutual satisfactions of worthy men. Hipparchus' dictum is the principle by which Socrates guided his life.

If one is not to deceive a friend, he must know the truth, and he must find other men who are capable of learning it from him. The real solution to the companion's impasse is not "Don't deceive a friend" but philosophy, which that exhortation implies. It is the only way of life which is both of profit to its practitioner and of benefit to those with whom he associates. This is of course not a political solution, for it implies a community composed only of the wise or the potentially wise, which is impossible. But Socrates' description of Hipparchus' politics contains a justification of his own life.

In order to support this praise of Hipparchus, Socrates must explain why he was assassinated and convert the conventional praise of Harmodius and Aristogeiton into blame. He accepts without question that the motives were erotic, but this is in no sense blameworthy in his eyes. Eros seems to constitute the core of life, and Hipparchus founded a regime in which eros can enjoy its full rights. Education is understood as an erotic activity or at least as closely bound up with it, and Hipparchus' ruling is only education. The true story, according to Socrates, is that Aristogeiton was a rival educator (perhaps of Delphic persuasion) and had loved and educated Harmodius, who in turn had loved a well-born boy. This boy began by admiring the older men's wisdom but had come to despise them after meeting Hipparchus. Because they were enraged at this dishonor, they slew Hipparchus. In this account, Hipparchus was not the unrequited lover who insulted the sister of Harmodius; Harmodius is the unrequited lover and Hipparchus an object of love. He was lovable be-

cause he was wise and was slain because his wisdom alienated the affections of the best of the young.

I submit that this tale of Hipparchus is nothing but a description of Socrates, and the intention of telling it is only to explain why Socrates was later put to death. Both Hipparchus and Socrates met death as a result of the envy of democrats who claimed that the youth were corrupted by their teachings. Socrates, like Hipparchus, was a lover of wisdom who benefited his friends by educating them and who competed with the Delphic oracle. He leads those who listen to him away from respect for the community and its leaders; he teaches them the immoderate pursuit of the good. Anytus, the major accuser of Socrates, was in later times said to have been a frustrated lover of Alcibiades, who himself said that he became a lover of Socrates. At all events, Anytus appears in Socrates' trial as the defender of the Athenian young against the Socratic seductiveness. I would suggest that as Socrates equals Hipparchus, Anytus equals Harmodius, and Alcibiades equals the nameless youth. Just as Harmodius turned to Aristogeiton, Anytus turns to his educator and lover, the Athenian *demos*, for aid in revenging himself on Socrates for stealing away Alcibiades. Just as Hipparchus and Aristogeiton were the real enemies there, Socrates and the *demos* are the real enemies here. Alcibiades despised the justice of the *demos*, and this was blamed, not totally without basis, on Socrates. Socrates silently exculpates himself by expressing reverence for the Hermae Alcibiades was accused of mutilating. But in spite of that, those Hermae were not meant to be protectors of the democracy, and Hipparchus is no friend to it. The little story of Hipparchus reiterates a well-known Socratic teaching: the wise should rule and should certainly never be ruled by the many.

Now, how does all of this relate to the companion and his argument? Very simply: the companion wants to impose the morality of the *demos* on Socrates and would ultimately be willing to destroy him if he does not accede. That morality consists in the restraint, according to the rules necessary to the existence of a community, of the pursuit of certain profitable things which are scarce and can be the sources of strife among men; it is the morality of private property. As revealed in the first section of the dialogue, Socrates cannot accept this morality, and his own teaching undermines it, at least in principle. One can say that the companion really holds that men are equal, in the sense that they all equally desire money and the things repre-

sented by it. The distinction among them is only in the way they pursue the satisfaction of that desire; the good men are those who play by the rules, the bad ones are those who do not. Men who pursue profit without restraint are enemies, and this is what Socrates does. It is a different kind of profit that the companion means, to be sure, but his net catches philosophers as well as bandits or embezzlers. Socrates' students would not be reliable citizens of a democracy, and Socrates himself does not hold that the lovers of wisdom should accept the way of life set down by the lovers of money. They want democracy; he is apparently a proponent of monarchy.

The first two parts of the dialogue present two kinds of lovers of profit, the lover of money and the lover of wisdom, and their necessary conflict. With the praise of Hipparchus, Socrates has revealed himself and manifested the source of the difficulty in the first part. The companion is really a praiser of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, for he can flourish in the regime of which they are the founders, just as Socrates would have flourished in the regime founded by Hipparchus. The first and second parts elaborate the conflict between the two men; the third is meant to be a resolution of sorts.

229d– Not surprisingly, Socrates fails to persuade the companion of the
230a validity of his earlier arguments by his invocation of Hipparchus. The companion says that either Socrates does not consider him to be a friend or he is not persuaded by Hipparchus. It would be hard for Socrates to disprove him on either count. Socrates' speeches seem to the companion to be like those of a profiteer; he deceives in argument, as do profiteers in business matters, but he is unable to find out quite where or how Socrates does it. He distrusts the cleverer, unconventional arguer. So Socrates inducts him into the art of dialectic to see whether he can learn and whether argument can persuade him. The companion is given the opportunity, as in chess, to change any of his earlier moves. Quite appropriately he returns to the attempt to distinguish between good and bad profit; he wishes to revoke his agreement that all profit is good. He appears to be thinking of something like the difference between money made in honest trade and that acquired in a bank robbery. He has steadily resisted the impetus of the argument tending to regard the one as just as legitimate as the other.

230a– Socrates begins the examination of the companion's assertion by
231c making explicit a general rule implied in that assertion: a thing is as much what it is whether it is good or bad; good does not relate to the

being of a thing, it is rather something a thing undergoes, an accident of being. Bad food, drink, or men *are* as much as good food, drink, or men. This may be a questionable rule, but it certainly reflects the companion's view: the money in itself is still money—and desirable—no matter how acquired. He accepts it readily. The next step is to define profit. At last this most essential question is posed. Socrates suggests an answer. Profit is spending nothing or little and getting back more. This is, of course, also readily accepted by the companion. Then Socrates suggests an example: a man gets a free dinner and then gets sick from it. Is that a profit? By Zeus, no! (The companion's oaths always reinforce his powerful awareness of his own self-interest.) The companion is brought back from the world of money to that of nature; he sees that he must define profit not in terms of more or less money but in terms of its human effects. Health is naturally good and food must be judged in relation to it. Having begun from the premise that a thing does not exist more or less due to its goodness or badness, we now end with the companion's asserting that a thing does not exist if it is not good. The good, originally taken to be irrelevant to nature, comes back as the cause of being. There can be no such thing as bad profit.

In order to see the deeper sense of this curious result, we must apply it to one of the examples mentioned, apparently casually, by Socrates—man. It was admitted that a man is a man whether he is good or bad; now it would appear that if he is not good, he is not a man. Socrates defined food and drink in terms of their function, as nourishment of the body. If they do not perform that function, they are not food and drink but mere shadows. It would follow that a man who did not fulfill his function as a man is not a man.

Such a conclusion would have profound political consequences. What has the shape of a man but does not fulfill the function of a man would not be treated in the same way as one who does. Just as the companion does not want to admit a hierarchy of profits, he does not want to admit a hierarchy of men. This understanding of man is democratic: all men are equal and have equal rights in the political community, the only distinction among them being made on the basis of their obeying the rules of that community. But Socrates, in the same way he has forced the companion to deny the equality of profits, or that much of what appears to be profit is profit, silently forces him to deny the equality of men, or that many who appear to be men are men. Food was judged in relation to health of the body;

men would be judged in relation to health of the soul. Socrates' understanding is profoundly aristocratic or even monarchic. The companion may have thought he was protecting the principle of equality in all of its forms in accepting the general rule; further probing resulted in his being forced to abandon the principles on which he bases his life.

231c– At this reversal of his position the companion confesses himself at a
 232b loss, in an *aporia*, or, as I would like to translate, without means. No amount of money or power can help him out here. Socrates tells him that it is not unjustly that he is without means, applying a new standard of justice, and reiterates the earlier definition of profit, spending less and getting more. The companion testily replies that he does not mean that getting more of something bad is profitable, but it is profitable if one gets more gold or silver. Socrates asks if it is a profit to spend a certain weight in gold and get twice that weight in silver. The companion eagerly replies that it would be a great loss. It is clear that it is not more or less that determines profit but worth. Gold is worth more than silver. One must know worth first of all; one wants more of what is worth something. The companion throughout has thought that determination of worth is a simple matter; everybody knows the worth of things measured in money. But how is it determined that gold is worth more than silver? That is merely a convention which has no relation to the human benefits connected with each, and it is the human benefits Socrates has been talking about. The companion is hopelessly conventional.

Money is what is worthwhile, according to the companion; the only way of distinguishing among men, then, is in their way of pursuing it, their means. For Socrates there are various levels of worthwhile things, and the primary way of distinguishing among men is in what they pursue as worthwhile, their ends. The political consequence of this is that, for the companion, the purpose of law would be to regulate the means of pursuing profit in such a way as to ensure the possibility of the existence of civil society, which, in its turn, is necessary for the pursuit of profit. Law would inevitably be the will of the community of lovers of money expressing their self-interest. For Socrates the primary standard for a law would be that which conduces to the benefit of the members of the community of true human beings. One can see why the companion and Socrates are at war.

The companion, because he is torn between his belief that every-

thing can be measured and bought with money and his awareness that there are natural goods like health, does again have to agree that profit is benefit and consequently that the profitable is always good, thus contradicting himself. He does not really see that it is the value of money that is called into question; he believes that it is the basis of morality that has been placed in doubt by Socrates. That would indeed be the result of Socrates' teaching for a man who believed money to be profit, since men should pursue the good and profit is good. It is hence a dangerous teaching.

32 The companion must now accept that good men want all possible
-c profit, whether great or small. He can no longer blame the profiteers. But he must if he is to protect his vital interests. He can see no unbridled pursuit of profit which would not be dangerous. Socrates tells him that the argument has compelled them to accept that the good men are profiteers. The companion responds that he is compelled but not persuaded. That does not seem to disturb Socrates; for if a man's passions prevent him from responding to the persuasion of reason, if his limitations, intellectual and moral, make it impossible for him to care for truth rather than gain, he should not be allowed to rule those who are capable of reason. He must be compelled, at least to the extent he impinges on the life of the others. Socrates is introducing a new tyranny, based on the force of argument. This accounts for his praise of Hipparchus and his tyrannical tone with the companion. If he cannot rule the companion, the companion will rule him. He tells the companion that his blame of profiteering is only hypocrisy inasmuch as he himself is a profiteer. His blame is his way of protecting his own profit at Socrates' expense. To compromise with him would be to compromise the higher with the lower, true profit with sham profit. Although this can in no sense result in a practical political proposal, the analysis of the companion and his thought indicates that he should not be treated with the concern or respect due a human being. The *Republic* is an attempt to find a regime in which philosophers are not ruled by such men, and the observations made by Socrates in this dialogue have a profound effect on the way he lives his life in democratic Athens, which is not the *Republic*. Maimonides sums up the teaching of the Hipparchus when speaking of the way in which a philosopher should live among his fellows: "He should . . . regard all people according to their various states with respect to which they are indubitably either like domestic animals or like beasts of prey. If the perfect man who lives in solitude thinks of

them at all, he does so only with a view to saving himself from the harm that may be caused by those among them who are harmful if he happens to associate with them, or to obtaining an advantage that may be obtained from them if he is forced to it by some of his needs.” This is the resolution, provided in the third part, of the antagonism presented in the first two parts of this very radical statement of the ancient view of the relation between the wise man and civil society.